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INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 7534  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 8971  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 5042  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 0297  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 5664  
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SUBJECT: FORMER PRESIDENT CESAR GAVIRIA REJECTS ALLEGATIONS  
OF URIBE ASSOCIATION WITH FORMER PARAMILITARIES

Classified By: Classified by Political Counselor John Creamer - Reasons  
1.4 (b,d)

11. (U) On May 5, El Tiempo newspaper published an interview with Cesar Gaviria, in which the Liberal Party chief and former president rejected allegations that President Alvaro Uribe was connected to former paramilitaries. When asked about attacks against the president, Gaviria said, "I do not agree at all with those kinds of insinuations. We (in the Liberal Party) have always followed a very respectful line with the president, and we see no reason to abandon that position now."

12. (U) The Liberal Party--on the center-left of the Colombian political spectrum--sharply criticized elements of Uribe's Justice and Peace Law, and Liberal Senators Piedad Cordoba and Cecilia Lopez led the November, 2006 debate in the Senate against former Foreign Minister Maria Consuelo Araujo because of her families' alleged para ties. Gaviria repeated the Party's criticisms of the J&P Law in his interview, but said the Liberal Party was a "different kind of opposition." He said the Liberals would support GoC initiatives that were in the national interest, differentiating the Liberals from Senator Petro and the Polo Democratico Party.

13. (C) Privately, Gaviria and numerous other senior contacts in the Liberal Party have repeatedly told us that charges of paramilitary ties against Uribe are groundless. The former president told us on May 8 he would not permit Liberal Party officials to criticize Uribe as the POLO has done. Gaviria, who supports passage of the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement and Plan Colombia, said he understood the damage that recent attacks have had on Colombia's image overseas. Still, he told us he is not prepared to travel to Washington at this time to make these points publicly due to Liberal intra-party politics.  
Drucker